TLC Sunlight Residential Aged Care, Whittlesea (Vic)

A new prescription for aged care medical services

In an initiative that could change the face of aged care medical services in this country, TLC Aged Care (TLC) is building healthcare hubs into its aged care facilities. **Kymberly Martin** reports.

It is a medical business model like no other – introducing community healthcare hubs into residential aged care facilities. And it has come about since, in the opinion of TLC Aged Care chief executive Lou Pascuzzi, the existing relationship between GPs and aged care is "broken."

Pascuzzi describes it as a timely but long overdue response to residents needs because when it comes to continuity of care and an intricate knowledge of resident issues "having GPs on site permanently in aged care homes provides for an ideal setting."

"Providing quality primary healthcare is a major challenge for the aged care industry. Unless we attract GPs to work in the aged care environment our industry will struggle to provide quality clinical care as the population ages." He believes it is becoming increasingly difficult for GPs to take time away from their regular practice to care for residents conducive to resident needs. As industry innovators, TLC has a plan to meet this challenge."

He says there has been a noticeable decline in the quality of aged care in recent times. Problems arise as GPs are only able to visit aged care homes around their medical practice patient schedules. "Residents need to be able to access services when the need arises, not just when a GP is available. You find when GPs are not available the residential aged care facility is forced to engage locums. Often locums rely on interpreting medical notes and may not be able to contact the patient's regular GP to confirm any issues or interpretations of those notes." He adds that "these fragmented GP and medical services carry a significant clinical risk."

Lou Pascuzzi

Pascuzzi says in order to minimise clinical errors and maximise patient outcomes, onsite access to the same group of readily available GP's promotes consistency of care.

As well as GPs permanently placed into the community healthcare hubs at TLC homes, each hub will have retail pharmacies and pathology collection centres established on-site. Agreements have been signed with Sonic Healthcare and Quality Pharmacies to provide these services. All minor surgery from skin biopsies and wound care through to excision of lesions and incision and draining of abscesses will be carried out at the hubs in purpose built minor procedural rooms. Allied health services will be available from physiotherapist, dieticians, podiatrists and mental health professionals. The allied health services will be provided by in-house staff, rather than contractors.

The healthcare services will be available to everyone in the community – not just residents of TLC's homes and their families. The GPs being engaged will also be able to continue to provide consultations at the hubs to their existing patients, Pascuzzi expects most residents and their families and friends will eventually use the hub services. "It is all about community engagement that enables locals to mix with residents, establish new relationships and enjoy the lifestyle and amenities offered by our homes."

He has been encouraged by the response from GPs which was greater than expected and TLC is confident of meeting its needs when it comes to highly qualified staff. TLC is paying GPs 80 per cent of the scheduled fee which is unheard of in the current market, where the industry average is 65 per cent.

All hubs will engage four full time GPs. The exception will be The Homestead and Homestead Lakes homes near Geelong where six full time GPs will be on site to look after residents as bed capacity increases to 270. When TLC's Homewood facility expands to 180 beds five full time GPs will be placed on-site to cater for demand.

TLC Clifton Hill (Vic) – Artist's Impression

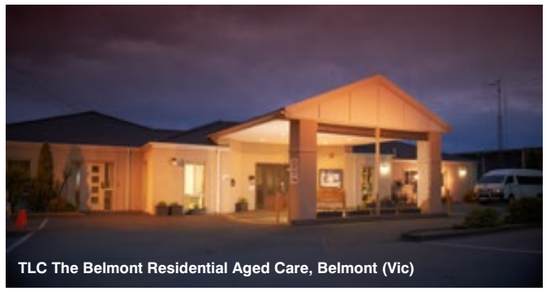
TLC COMMUNITY HEALTHCARE HUBS ARE DELIVERING:

- ✓ general practitioners
- ✓ retail pharmacies
- ✓ physiotherapy
- ✓ mobile radiology
- ✓ pathology
- ✓ telehealth
- ✓ day respite
- ✓ other allied health services

Pascuzzi is adamant the initiative is not about making money, its core objective is to provide quality care for residents and mend what he describes as the fragmented relationship that exists in residential aged care, minimising clinical error.

"The majority of TLC profits comes from the residential aged care homes. Commercially we stand to make a small EBITDA profit from the medical centres, but ultimately the outcome I want is good continuity of care for our residents."

TLC will install state-of-the art ICT systems including Best Practice software, premium TeleHealth infrastructure in all GP consult suites, Medicare Easyclaims

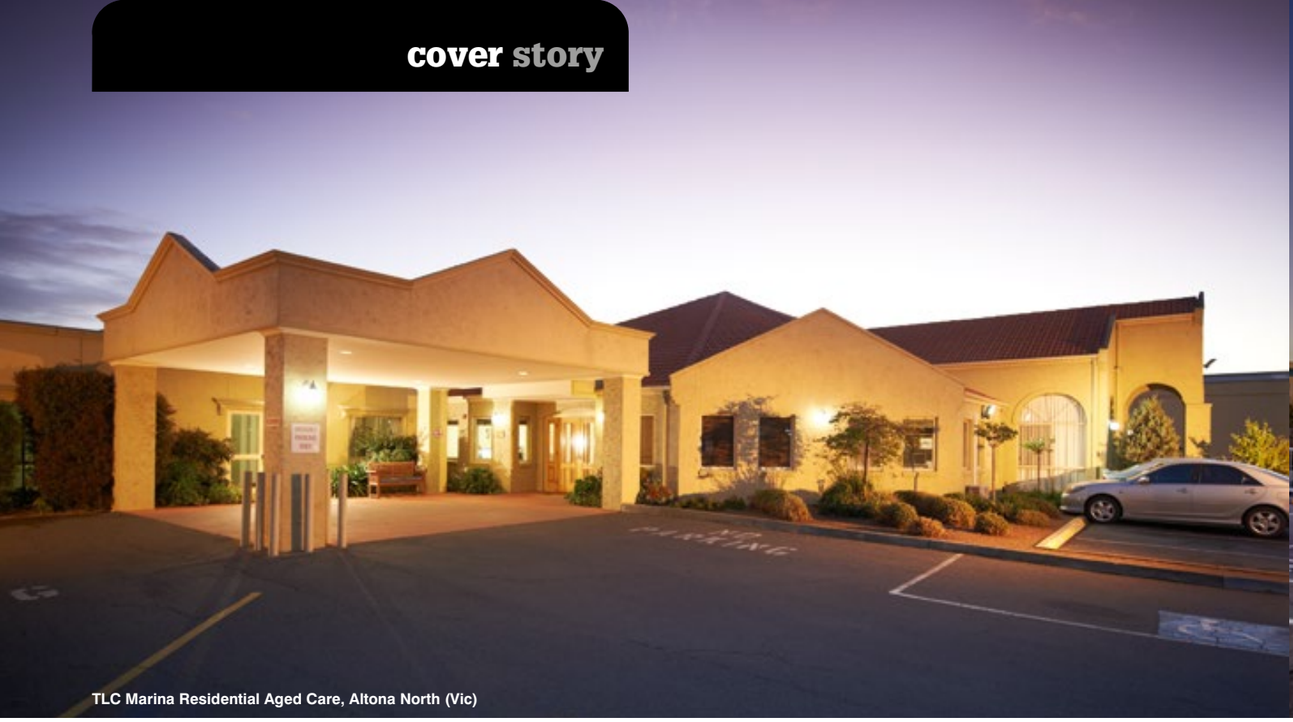


TLC The Belmont Residential Aged Care, Belmont (Vic)

TLC The Homestead Residential Aged Care, Wallington (Vic)

TLC Forest Lodge Residential Aged Care, Frankston North (Vic)

TLC Homestead Lakes Residential Aged Care, Wallington (Vic)



TLC Marina Residential Aged Care, Altona North (Vic)

TLC The Heights Residential Aged Care, Donvale (Vic)

and Personally Controlled Electronic Health Record (PCEHR) compliance into all hubs.

The first of the TLC community healthcare hubs opens in Frankston in February 2015 followed by Noble Park in early March with the remaining hubs all scheduled to open during 2015.

NEW DEVELOPMENTS

In the largest infrastructure investment in the company's history, the group is spending $120 million on new home developments. TLC is developing two new aged care homes, one at Clifton Hill on the edge of the Melbourne CBD and the other at Armstrong Creek near Geelong.

In addition to these new homes, TLC's homes at Hallam in Melbourne and Wallington near Geelong will be expanded by more than 200 beds. TLC has also earmarked $150 million for operational home acquisitions that is not limited to Victoria.

"We are currently looking at 13 possible acquisitions in Victoria, Queensland and New South Wales, carrying out due diligence on a number of sites in the three states." There are no plans to move into other areas such as community or home care. As Pascuzzi puts it "TLC is a specialist in residential aged care and intends remaining there."

The Clifton Hill facility will be the tallest residential aged care home in the Southern Hemisphere, standing at 11 levels when it opens in 2016. Its community healthcare hub will occupy the ground floor and incorporate a café. There will be two levels devoted to dementia care with the remaining occupied by residential aging in place care. The home boasts 5-star resort style amenities and lifestyle services including commercial grade health club and expansive roof top pool.

TLC advocates establishing aged care homes in areas where people have spent most of their lives, not where aged care providers can afford to build facilities. According to Pascuzzi there is a growing demand from people wanting to avail themselves of aged care services in places they are familiar with.

"Our modelling dictates that the majority of people who will move to a premium facility like Clifton Hill live within a 10km radius. Apart from being a prime location in the inner city, acute care facilities are nearby. So if any immediate specialist treatment is required the services are just a few minutes away. Allowing people to maintain their local network of family and friends is important too, with multiple transport mediums at the home's door promoting accessibility. They can now live in their local community, but the only change is they might have moved a few kilometres up the road to their new home."

POSITIVE FEEDBACK

Pascuzzi says response from resident's families to TLC's new healthcare model has been extremely positive, while the reaction from the clinical fraternity has been along the lines of: 'it has been a long time coming'.

TLC Noble Manor Residential Aged Care, Noble Park (Vic)

"Integrating aged care accommodation with primary health care is the only way to improve the standard of care while creating opportunities to reduce costs by improving co-ordination of government funding" he said. "We cannot continue with existing health care models that are becoming financially untenable for present day governments and will only get worse over time. Clearly the winners are the government, the residents, the community, the tax payer and TLC professionally and commercially as well."

"It's about bringing the big healthcare funding areas together that service primary care (Medicare Benefits Schedule – MBS), aged care (Aged Care Funding Instrument – ACFI) and acute care (Medicare Benefits Schedule – MBS & the Private Health Funds).

"What we are doing is providing a better healthcare product to our residents and the community. The TLC healthcare hub model is a unique offering in the Australian aged care industry marrying residential aged care with primary healthcare for the first time."

About TLC

- TLC is the largest family-owned provider of residential aged care services in Victoria
- It employs over 1300 staff and operates 10 homes in Victoria
- TLC's mission is to provide people in their care with the quality of life that they would expect for their family.

For further information visit www.tlcagedcare.com.au

tlc AGED CARE

TLC Aged Care (TLC) has also partnered with Alzheimer's Australia Vic to develop a supported living program that gives people living with dementia in residential aged care the opportunity to lead more meaningful and fulfilling lives. The project included the redesign of its dementia specific units and a new approach to how care was provided.

Alzheimer's Australia Vic is providing advice to TLC on dementia-friendly design and best practice care across nine secure units, as well as providing specialist training for staff and family members.

At TLC's home in the Melbourne suburbs of Altona North, Marina, the pilot project was successfully completed and the program is now being implemented across the dementia units in the remaining eight of TLC's homes.

Pascuzzi intends to launch various other innovative initiatives in the coming 24 months geared to further healthcare integration including acute care (hospitals) and solutions to the resource shortages currently experienced by the aged care industry, to name a few. "The initiatives will revolutionise healthcare in Australia", says Pascuzzi. ■